

FEMA Ends Home Visits; Beware of Scammers, Price Gouging

Release Date: November 9, 2023

ATLANTA – Personnel from FEMA's Disaster Survivor Assistance (DSA) program are no longer visiting Georgia Hurricane Idalia survivors at their homes to check their well-being or to help them apply for federal disaster assistance. This is because door-to-door visits have ended in Berrien, Brooks, Cook, Glynn and Lowndes counties.

With this phase of the disaster recovery concluding, scam artists, identity thieves and other criminals may attempt to take advantage of disaster survivors when they are in a stressful state.

It is important for survivors to remain alert, ask questions and always ask for identification when someone claims to represent FEMA or another government agency. FEMA does not certify contractors or any commercial enterprise.

Scams can take different forms, including phone calls, texts, mail, email, websites, or in person. Federal and Georgia emergency management officials urge residents to watch for and report any suspicious activity by calling the FEMA Disaster Fraud Hotline at 866-720-5721.

In addition, post-disaster price gouging is often rampant in hurricane-damaged regions and has been reported in southern Georgia following Hurricane Idalia. The State Bar of Georgia has received reports of fraudulent price gouging that include: 1. survivors being charged \$75,000 for tree cutting by out-of-state companies; 2. invoices for eight hours of work when a service only lasted three hours; and 3. homeowners being charged for chainsaw purchases made by vendors. If you've been a victim or witness to price gouging or post-disaster fraud, file a report on the Georgia Attorney General Consumer Protection Division's website at <https://consumer.georgia.gov/>.



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Other common post-disaster fraud practices to watch for include:

- Phony government workers: You may be contacted by scam artists posing as disaster workers who are seeking money for services. **Federal, state and local disaster workers do not solicit or accept money.**
- Fake offers of state or federal aid: Federal disaster employees will not promise a disaster grant. **FEMA and U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) personnel never charge applicants for disaster assistance, inspections or help with completing applications. No money is solicited or accepted.**
- Beware of unlicensed/uninsured and phony building contractors: Individuals may represent themselves as legitimate contractors. **Ask for references, be cautious about advance payments, make sure they are licensed and insured and obtain the proper permits.**
- Phony housing inspectors: **There is no charge for a FEMA inspection.** FEMA inspectors will contact you to set a time to meet at the address where the damage was reported and to obtain any other required information. **All FEMA personnel and contractors will have an official laminated photo ID badge.** You may ask to see it.
- Fraudulent charitable solicitations: A list of reputable charities that are approved by the Better Business Bureau's Wise Giving Alliance is available at [Give.Org](https://www.give.org). The Alliance advises, **"do not respond to unsolicited emails, watch out for pushy telemarketers and look out for fake charities that sound real."**

If you think you may have been the victim of a scam or price gouging, report it immediately to your local police or sheriff's department or contact the Georgia Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division at 404-651-8600 or 800-869-1123.

For the latest information on Georgia's recovery from Hurricane Idalia, visit fema.gov/disaster/4738, follow FEMA on X, formerly known as Twitter, at twitter.com/femaregion4 and at facebook.com/fema.

